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CALFED Role and Policy
With Respect to San Joaquin River Water Quality Problems
February 17, 1997

The CALFED Geographic Problem Area is the legally defined Delta. Resolution of problems within this area is the CALFED mission. It is understood that some species that inhabit the Delta are impacted by conditions outside the Delta. Also, areas outside the Delta are sources of water quality parameters of concern to the Delta and its inhabitant species. In resolving the problems of the Delta, CALFED may undertake actions throughout its Geographic Solution Area, as necessary. The Solution Area includes the San Joaquin River watershed. Water quality parameters of concern as defined by the Water Quality Technical Group in the San Joaquin River and Delta Estuary are shown in Table 1, attached.

Sources of water quality problems in the San Joaquin River and its tributaries include:

- agricultural tail water, or return flows, which may contribute salts, nutrients, pesticide residues, pathogens, and turbidity;
- subsurface agricultural drainage that may contribute salts, nutrients, fungicides, and selenium;
- storm inflows that may contribute turbidity, pathogens, organic carbon, nutrients, pesticide, and other chemical residues.
- municipal and industrial discharges that may contribute salts, nutrients, metals, pathogens, chemical residues, and turbidity;
- acid drainage from old mines which introduce metals such as zinc, cadmium, copper, and mercury; and,
- surface and subsurface seepage potentially containing nutrients, pathogens, and turbidity.

Probably the most significant source of water quality degradation in the San Joaquin River system is agricultural drainage and return flows. During periods of low flow, drainage and return flows can comprise the majority of San Joaquin River flow. Water quality experts familiar with the problems of the San Joaquin River watershed generally agree that any long term solution to these problems must include some mechanism for reducing salt loading to the system. Otherwise, management of the quality of San Joaquin River waters must primarily rely on distributing salt loads in the river system. Temporary solutions include retaining salt laden drainage waters during periods of low flow and similar measures to temporarily reduce discharges to the San Joaquin River, without affecting long term salt balance in the Valley.

CALFED recognizes that the San Joaquin River has a pronounced effect on the quality of the

waters of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. It is also recognized that, ultimately, a complete solution to the problems of San Joaquin River water quality will require mechanisms to permanently reduce the salt load coming into the river from agricultural activities. These mechanisms may include source reduction, regional treatment and disposal, or collection and disposal to the ocean. The water quality problems of the San Joaquin River have been under study for many years through the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Implementation Program (SJVDIP), a multi-agency federal/state/local entity that was established for the purpose of solving salt and related toxic element management problems of the San Joaquin River system. CALFED will rely on the SJVDIP to provide the overall direction for long term solutions of these problems.

It is the intent of CALFED to act in full coordination with the SJVDIP to facilitate activities directed to resolving water quality problems from the sources listed above, from an overall watershed approach. In determining priorities for action, CALFED will determine whether proposed activities are consistent with CALFED Solution Principles relating to affordability, solution durability, equity, and non-redirection of impacts. In addition, the following will be considered:

- the degree to which the proposed activity will improve the quality of Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary waters, in comparison to the cost of implementing the solution;
- whether proposed activities related to water quality are consistent with CALFED objectives related to ecological restoration, water supply, and system reliability issues;
- consistency with the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Improvement Program and other existing water quality management and control programs;
- the extent to which the problem and proposed solutions have been investigated and technically documented;
- the demonstrated probability that the proposed solution will be successful;
- whether there are prospective local/state/federal participants or partnerships to support problem resolution, and whether a suitable management infrastructure exists;

To formulate detailed policies, plans and actions, CALFED staff will work with San Joaquin Valley stakeholders, especially the staff of the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Implementation Program, and will undertake an active program of outreach to assure the interests of all stakeholders are represented.

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